

Residential Study Group (RSG)
October 26, 2016
Arlington Town Hall, First Floor Conference Room
5:45-6:45PM

Attendees: Walter Fey, Zoning Board of Appeals; Steve McKenna, Town Manager appointee; Bill Copithorne, Real Estate Industry; Pasi Miettinen, Town Manager appointee; Wynelle Evans, Town Manager appointee; Rick Vallarelli, Inspectional Services; Michael Byrne, Inspectional Services; Janice Weber, Town Meeting Member; Jenny Raitt, Planning and Community Development; Laura Wiener, Planning and Community Development; Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager; Adam Auster, Town Meeting Member; Wendy Richter, Master Plan Implementation Committee.

Jenny opened the meeting. Members went around the table and shared their name and the name of group they represent. The group then moved onto the next agenda item: a review of the prior meeting's discussion and outcomes. The group reviewed and approved the meeting minutes from October 13th and then began a discussion about the October 22nd site visits. To jump start the site visit discussion, Jenny asked the group to "pair and share" and to have each person discuss three takeaways from the site visits, three concerns that they believe the group should address, and the best part about the site visit.

The primary issues that the group took away from the site visits and that members would like the group to address were around construction impacts, including noise and neighborhood notification before and communication during the process. Group members emphasized the importance of neighbors wanting to be aware of the process. Notification and communication between builders and abutters is important as is the impact on property owners seeking to build new homes.

The second issue that resonated strongly for group members was around how to address driveway pitches in front of homes. Group members suggested that we might explore parking and dimensional requirements, but to take a flexible approach because not every neighborhood in Arlington is the same. Similar to this issue was the location and size of front facing garages, particularly relative to the size of a house and the distance to a curb.

Many group members expressed that the homes proposed or built that we viewed on the site visit, were not as large as they thought they could be, per zoning, and that they were appropriate for their respective neighborhoods. Some group members were focused on aesthetics of the new homes. The group agreed that this was not the focus of the Study Group. Related to this matter, the site visit discussion illustrated that many of the issue would not necessarily be addressed by amending the Zoning Bylaw. Jenny suggested that not all changes would be related to zoning and that some changes might be needed to Town Bylaws. The group also continued to wonder about the unintended consequences of zoning amendments, whether builders would be supportive of amendments, and how to address the issue of enforcing existing laws.

The group emphasized that it might be important to make zoning amendments by neighborhood or district. Rick stated that many of the main concerns expressed to his department are related to the height and size. However, the group agreed that the homes we visited fit into existing neighborhoods. While the Park Street example of a semi-steep driveway pitch was a good example, group members felt that there were other examples of newer two-family homes on the same street with garages and at-grade driveways with improved landscape.

The summary and follow-up for the meeting includes that Jenny will forward the following materials to the group for review and discussion at the next meeting on November 15th at 6:00 p.m.:

- Neighborhood Conservation District information and research
- Potential ways to address construction impacts

Group members also agreed that they would work on their "assignments" as noted in the meeting minutes from October 13th. The group requested that the meetings last longer to maintain momentum and complete discussions.